Keeping in view the importance of Agriculture in the economy, the Union Budget 2005-06 has provided substantia outlays in the areas like horticulture and irrigation including micro irrigation. The budget has provided Rs. 630 crore in 2005-06 for National Horticulture Mission, which will ensure end-to-end approach having backward and forward linkages covering research, production, post harvest management, processing and marketing, under one umbrella, in an integrated manner. The budget has provided Rs. 4800 crore for Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme for 2005-06 compared with Rs. 2800 crore in 2004-05. With a view to improving water use in Indian agriculture, the Budget has provided Rs. 400 crore for promoting micro irrigation in 2005-06. Since the flow of credit is important in accelerating the pace of investment in agriculture, the disbursement of agricultural credit is proposed to be stepped up by 30% per cent from commercial banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks to the agriculture sector in 2005-06. The measures are expected to lead to a reversal of the deceleration in agricultural growth. Simultaneously, since agriculture is a state subject, states will have to increase their budgetary outlays on agriculture.

National Farmers Welfare Fund

1272. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the farmers have to face quite often and calamities like floods, droughts, land slides, etc. and suffer losses running into billions; and

(b) whether Government would consider to institute National Farmers Welfare Fund to ensure that the difficulties faced by the farmers are warded off?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The following are the major initiatives to provide relief to calamity affected farmers:

(i) A mechanism exists in the form of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) and the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) to provide immediate relief to the victims of natural calamities including the farmers.

(ii) Making good the production loss under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS).

(iii) Many measures are in existence to mitigate distress of calamity affected farmers through interest relief and rescheduling of loans etc.

Keeping the above in view there is no proposal to consider institution of a separate Welfare Fund for farmers.

Caterpillar menace in MP

†1273. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the action being taken by Government regarding the use of advanced techniques in agricultural sector;

(b) whether Madhya Pradesh has always faced the problem of caterpillars and if so, what steps have been taken by Government in order to protect the crop of soyabean from the menace of caterpillars; and

(c) the kind of cooperation assured by the Central Government to the State Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Government is propagating Integrated Pest Management (IPM), encompassing cultural, mechanical and biological methods and need based use of chemical pesticides, as the cardinal principle and main plank of plant protection through Farmers' Field Schools.

(b) and (c) During the past few years, the soyabean crop in Madhya Pradesh has been infested by caterpillars due to conducive weather conditions. The State Government was advised to adopt appropriate remedial measures including IPM and to utilize funds allocated under the Integrated Scheme for Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM) and Macro Management Scheme for controlling the pest. The State Government was also advised to avail technical support, if required, from the National Research Centre on Soyabean, Indore and the Central Integrated Pest Management Centre, Indore.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.